

Sea Bathing

(Written for "The Listener" by DR. H. B. TURBOTT, Director of the Division of School Hygiene, Health Department)

THE season of sea-bathing is here. Most people plan holidays by the seaside, if possible. For every one person travelling inland for summer vacations, there are dozens headed for the sea coast. Have you ever thought why this custom has developed in our civilised life? I think it comes from an instinctive urge to live healthily.

Our ancestors were not completely encased in clothes, and the air bathed their bodies. Judging by the native races with whom I have lived for a time, it is our civilised form of life that stops them from daily bathing in sea or pools. Where they still live their own life, daily bathing is a feature of village life. What do we still regard as essential for healthful living, a bath of water, a bath of air, a bath of sunshine! Where do we get these all at once? At the seaside, bathing on the beaches! It seems to me the urge to get to the seaside for holidays is an instinctive return, for a limited period, to the easiest available health tonic—a tonic of air, water and sunshine that our forebears took daily from the way they lived.

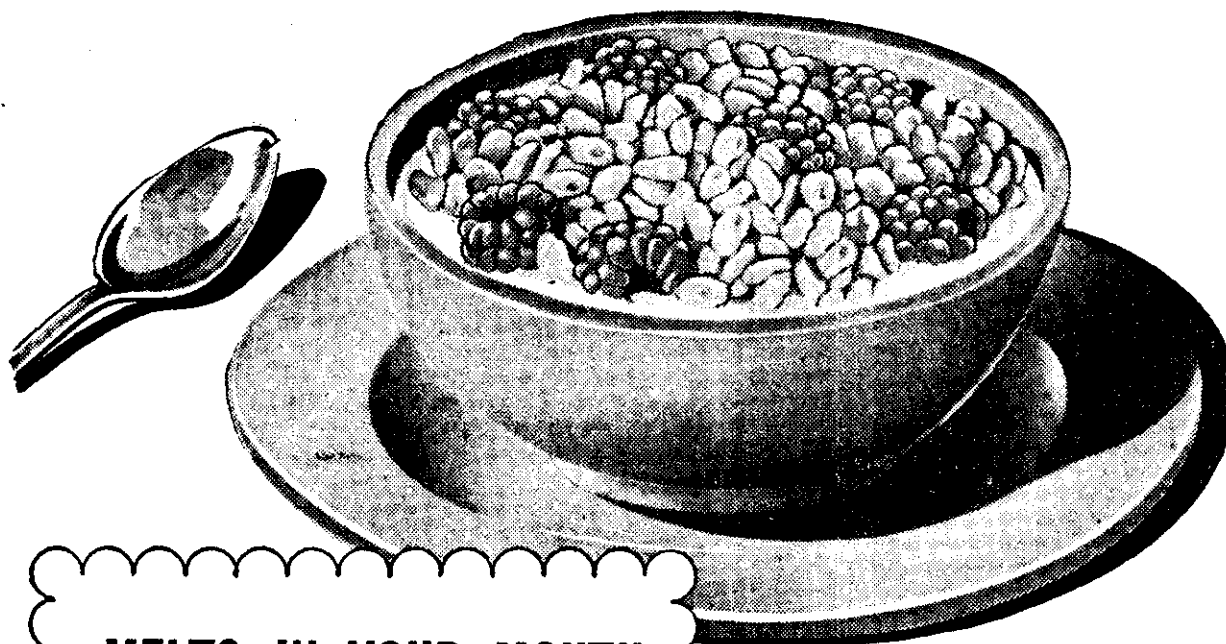
Take This Tonic

When you go sea-bathing all three are available together—air, water and sunshine. Sea water is a solution of natural salts not differing greatly from the salines in the blood stream. The sodium chloride in sea water stimulates the nerve endings in the skin. In addition, the movement of the waves and the impact of the surf and the wind on the skin gives mechanical stimulation—a form of water and air massage—douching on a big scale. The breathing is deepened, the circulation quickened, and the first chill of immersion sets up a reaction of muscular movement or shivering till a feeling of glow and well-being develops. The sunshine plays its part. All three—sea water, air and sunshine—join to make a great tonic—one that you should take this summer if possible. But there are mistakes to avoid in taking this tonic.

Short dips are the best. To go in for a long swim, an hour or more in the sea water, is not so healthful as two or more brief dips in the day. Even for the healthiest and strongest people—this is true—remember that frequent short sea-bathing is better value than prolonged stays in the water.

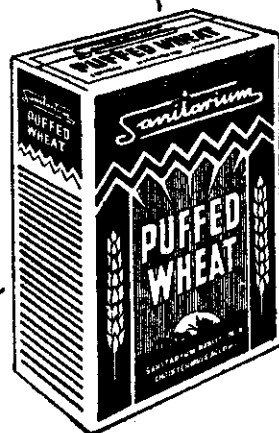
Some people when in for a swim spend all their time in the deeper water, often well out beyond the waves, swimming, floating and enjoying their mastery of the salty element. It is better to spend part of the time shore-bathing, letting the waves or surf splash and gently buffet the body so that you get mechanical sea water and air massage. While the far-out deep water swimmers may feel superior to the shore bathers, the shallow water dippers among the waves are getting the fullest tonic value for the time spent in the water, so that there's no need to feel inferior because you stick to the shore. You can harbour a little envy of deep water swimming skill, and still go on enjoying your time among the waves.

(To be continued)



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